

Exercise and Play

Puppies need both mental and physical exercise. When you meet these needs, your puppy will be easier to manage. If these needs are not met, your puppy can become very bored and create a lot of mischief. This can cause problems for both you and your puppy.

Taking the puppy for a walk a couple of times a day is a good beginning, but this is not enough. If it is possible, find a place where he can be taken off his leash safely to let him run around and play. He will need interaction with you to really get the exercise he needs. This is a great time to introduce him to a few games that will stimulate him both mentally and physically.

When you take him to a safe place where he can be off-leash, bring one of his favourite toys along to play fetch. This could be a squeaky toy, a tennis ball, or anything else he enjoys playing with. Bring plenty of his favourite treats as well. There are many wonderful games you can play with your puppy to stimulate him mentally and also give him the exercise he needs. If he has a safe, properly immunised puppy friend or adult dog to play with, this can be a great way for him to exercise. He will also learn how to play nicely with other dogs. Playing games are a fun way your puppy can learn new cues and exercise at the same time.

Fetch!

Let the puppy see the toy right before you take him off-leash. In a happy voice, ask if he wants the toy while bouncing or squeaking it. Throw the toy just a foot away from where you are standing and say the cue “Go get it.” The second he puts the toy in his mouth, mark the behaviour with “Yes” or a click from your clicker. Then give the cue “Bring it here,” and lure (let him see the treat) him over with a wonderful treat like a piece of chicken.

Now give the cue “Drop-it.” When he does, give him the tasty piece of chicken and tell him what a good boy he is. Repeat this, but throw the toy just a little farther each time, using the same cues. After throwing the toy five or six times, end the game while you are both enjoying yourselves. The next time the puppy has an outing with you, you can play again. Start off with the toy close, and each time throw it a little farther away. It is important to **end the play training on a positive note** while you are still having fun. If your puppy bites your hand by accident before dropping the toy, the game is over—no excuses. Put him back on-leash and walk away. Wait at least five minutes before beginning the game again or paying any attention to him. **This is very important.** You do not want to teach him it is okay to bite you under any circumstances!

Chase!

Another game you can play with your puppy while he is off-leash in a safe place is a game of chase. There is, however, one very important rule to this game: ***Never chase him.*** If you do, you will be training your puppy to run away from you. With his leash still on, give the cue “Come” in a happy voice and start to run backward a few feet away from your puppy. (Be careful not to trip or hurt yourself.) When he follows and catches up to you, stop and mark his coming toward you with “Yes” or a click from your clicker, and give him a treat. You can repeat this a few times, extending the length of space between where you start and where

you stop. Remember to mark his coming toward you each time, and then give him a treat when he reaches you to reinforce the desired behaviour.

Note these few rules when playing with your puppy:

1. If he bites you by accident, the game stops immediately. No excuses.
2. If he jumps on you because he is excited, turn your back on him or step into his space. Once all four of his feet are on the ground, you can then mark and reward him for coming. Never give him a treat unless all four feet are on the ground. If you do, you will be rewarding him for jumping on you.
3. Never just pull a toy out of his mouth. Exchange toys for treats using the *drop-it* cue until he understands the cue.

Tug-of-War!

Tug-of-war is another game you can play with your puppy. If he already knows the cue *drop-it*, this is a great game to play. If he does not understand the cue *drop-it*, then this game can be a great way to teach him the cue.

Some people believe that playing tug-of-war with their puppies will make them aggressive. This is untrue. This game simply requires *rules that need to be followed*.

Find a safe toy that is made for this game. A safe toy allows room for the puppy to grab the toy without grabbing your skin. Play the game with him for a few minutes and then give the cue "Drop-it" and offer him a treat as an exchange for the toy. If he does not drop the toy, the game is over. Walk away and ignore him. If he bites you by accident while playing this game, stop and walk away; the game is over. **There is no such thing as an accidental bite.** If you make excuses for the puppy that the bite was an accident, he will learn to bite again next time you play the game. After all, biting each other is one way puppies play together. He will not understand he should not bite you unless you let him know that all play and attention stop when a bite occurs. In a few minutes you can try again, but for now you want him to understand that when he bites, the game stops and you will completely ignore him. In time, he will understand your rules and begin to play this game politely.

Other Activities

You can enrol your puppy in classes for exercise and play. You can choose from Agility, Fly Ball, Earth Dog, Freestyle Dance, or Frisbee. If you have access to a pool your puppy can swim in, that is also a great way to exercise him. If you do allow your puppy in a pool, make sure he understands how to get out of the pool safely on his own right away. This is a safety "must do" when a puppy is allowed in a pool. All of the above-mentioned exercises are great ways to give your puppy the exercise and exposure he needs. Introducing him to new environments and situations are a plus. These all provide physical and mental stimulation.



If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us